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The Martyr President.

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE COLORED CITIZENS OF RALEIGH, N. C.

AT THE DEDICATION OF THE

STATUE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

August 1, 1865.

BY ELIAS SMITH,
A WAR CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEW YORK TRIBUNE.

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ORATION.

Freemen of North Carolina!

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At this auspicious season, when your fields wave with ripening grain, waiting for the harvest of the reaper; when trees everywhere bend beneath their wealth of foliage and fruit, and the husbandman looks hopefully forward to well-filled barns for the supply of sterile Winter; when all Nature, warmed and mellowed by God's all-ripening sun, seems with upturned face to break forth in hymns of praise to the Giver of all good for the bounties of his providence, — it is fitting that you, too, should join your hearts and voices in Nature's great anthem of rejoicing and praise. For lo! your Winter is over and gone, the time for the singing of birds has come, the flowers appear on the earth, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. Go with me in your imagination to the islands of the sea, and what do you *this day* hear and behold? Borne upon the wings of the soft tropical breeze which floats through the leaves of the graceful and shady cocoa-nut and palm, we hear the voice of gladness and rejoicing! We see a great multitude which no man can number, marching to the sound of solemn music. Antigua, Jamaica, Barbadoes, St. Lucia, Trinidad — all are alive with a jubilant population. They throng every broad avenue of their cities; they pour in endless processions through their valleys; they fill the spice-laden groves, and crowd their consecrated

temples with a happy, joyous throng. On they go, bright as the moon, clear as the sun, and invincible as an army with banners, which flash out in the bright tropical sun, the names of WILBERFORCE, CLARKSON, GRANVILLE SHARPE, THOMPSON." "*August First*, 1834." "Eight Hundred Thousand bondmen made free in the British Islands! Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men!" "Four Millions of our brethren in the United States stretch out their unfettered hands to us across the sea! We send you greeting, brethren and sisters of our long oppressed but now delivered race!"

And now listen to the great anthem that swells and rides upon the morning breeze:

"Freemen, awake the song!
Gladly the strain prolong,
Welcome this day!
It tells of glory won,
By deeds of valor done;
Shout till the setting sun
Sheds its last ray.

"Our happy land we sing —
Your joyful tribute bring,
The song to swell;
Sing of our country's worth,
The place of Freedom's birth,
The noblest spot on earth,—
Her blessings tell."

"God save the Queen!" mingles with "The Star Spangled Banner," for that, too, is the banner of the free. Orators dwell on the happy theme: tables groan beneath a luxurious load of tropical fruits, while mirth, and song, and the dance by happy groups in spicy groves, conclude the festivities of the day.

Responsive to this joyous outburst of *two millions* of freemen, the sons of Ham throughout our own land, joined by all the friends of impartial freedom in glorious New England and over the broad West, meet this day to celebrate — not alone the deliverance of England's bondmen — but the emancipation of *four millions* of American slaves, set free by the fiat of Almighty God.

In no spirit of vain boasting; with no words of reproach on

our lips toward our enslavers in the North or in the South ; but with solemn and grateful psalms of thanksgiving and praise, we accept from the hand of Jehovah the boon of precious freedom, consecrating in our heart of hearts the memory of the great, the good, the honest statesman, the pure and christian patriot, by whose right hand the great charter of Liberty was signed. Freemen, arise, and look upon the earthly form of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, your martyred President.

[The Statue was here unveiled, and the congregation arose and sang :

" From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise ;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,
Through every land, by every tongue.

" Eternal are thy mercies, Lord,
Eternal truth attends thy word,
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore
Till suns shall rise and set no more."]

Placed here, in this consecrated temple, by the hand of affection and gratitude, for a perpetual *memento*, is all that is left us of the earthly form of the great soul whom God in His inscrutable wisdom and goodness had chosen for your deliverer. Erected in this place, as a grateful testimonial of undying affection by this church, as well as by all the free men and women of Raleigh, we now dedicate, with solemn prayer and holy psalm, this statue of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the martyr President, the *Great Emancipator*. Here may it ever remain, a memorial of perpetual gratitude to God,— a reminder of him whose calm and wise statesmanship, by the blessing of God, led you out of the house of bondage.

With no spirit of man-worship, but with a reverent bowing of the heart before the Maker of all men, we accept this new and glorious dispensation of Divine favor, meekly casting our crowns at His feet, and crying with spirits around the throne, " Holy holy, holy Lord God Almighty ! the whole earth is full of thy glory ! just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Rejecting all thoughts of sectarian exclusiveness, we dedicate this statue to God, in the name of universal justice and of im-

partial freedom. ABRAHAM LINCOLN is the common heritage of the whole nation — of all men throughout the world who revere justice, who honor true manhood, and who love their race.

Thanks, eternal thanks to God, for ABRAHAM LINCOLN; thanks for the freedom he has brought us; thanks to the artist who has preserved to us so faithful a copy of the outer man. "The dust has returned to the earth as it was — the spirit to God who gave it." That eye, which watched with sleepless vigilance for four long and dreadful years over the varying fortunes of the Republic, is forever closed in death; that heart, which beat with kindest sympathy for all in distress, has ceased to palpitate; the hand, which was always open to relieve the widow and the orphan — which, as a last and crowning act, signed the great Charter of Freedom for four millions of human beings, is forever still. But his work was done. From the theatre of his patient struggle with a gigantic rebellion, protracted through more than four long years,— from labors, such as never before fell to the lot of any potentate of earth,— he has gone to his reward. He was immortal until his work was finished. Like Moses, who conducted the Israelitish nation out of the house of bondage, he came to the borders of the promised land, and, while looking from his Pisgah's top over the green fields which lay spread out in glory and beauty before him,— his ears already drinking in the exultant songs of deliverance from a whole nation of freemen, —"he was not, for God took him." He died that you might live a life of freedom. Had he withheld his hand from that crowning act of justice to you; listening to timid counsels, had he turned his back upon you; had he "stopped his ears at the cry of the poor," *he might have been living to-day*,— living, perhaps, to witness the re-enslavement of a whole nation whose chains had virtually been broken by the act of their own masters,— living to listen to the reproaches and maledictions of unborn generations. But God had raised him up for a nobler purpose; had endowed his soul with noble attributes; had made him a vessel unto honor and glory. He was truly Nature's nobleman! "It is the Lord's doings, and marvellous in our eyes."

From the earliest periods of time, nations have labored to do honor to their great and good men. The humblest man or woman cherishes every relic of a dear departed friend. The Egyptians, to perpetuate their own greatness as a nation, and to furnish a mausoleum for the repose of their kings, devoted centuries to the completion of their pyramids, which have long survived the fame and even the name of those early potentates. The massive stone is there — the men, where are they? The Romans built costly sepulchres to receive the earthly remains of their emperors, which have long since crumbled to dust with the forms that lay within them. To commemorate the deeds of her great men, France erects monuments of enduring marble, while Westminster Abbey contains all that is mortal of England's illustrious statesmen, orators and poets. But more imperishable than the pyramids; more costly than the sepulchres of the Romans; more enduring than the columns of Vendome and Versailles, or the venerable piles of Westminster Abbey, are the name and the fame of him whose form is before you. Pyramids may crumble, columns may decay, all works of art may perish and be forgotten, but so long as *nations live* the name of ABRAHAM LINCOLN, the *martyr President* — the *emancipator of four millions of human beings*,— will remain imperishable.

"Unnumbered pilgrims o'er the wave,
In the far ages yet to be,
Will come to kneel beside his grave,
And hail him prophet of the Free.
'T is holier ground, that lowly bed,
In which his mouldering form is laid,
Than fields where Liberty has bled,
Beside her broken battle-blade.

"Who now, in danger's fearful hour,
When all around is wild and dark,
Shall guide with voice and arm of power,
Our FREEDOM-CONSECRATED ARK?
With stricken hearts, O God, to thee,
Beneath whose feet the stars are dust,
We bow, and ask that thou wilt be
Through every ill our stay and trust."

Thus has ABRAHAM LINCOLN mingled his blood with the noble army of martyrs who have laid down their lives in the holy cause of human freedom. It has been well said by another, "He has been a marvel and a phenomenon among statesmen, a new kind of ruler in the earth. There has been something even unearthly about his extreme unselfishness, his utter want of personal ambition, self-valuation, personal feeling. The most unsparing criticism, denunciation and ridicule never moved him to a single bitter expression, never seemed to awaken in him a single bitter thought. The most exultant hour of party victory brought no exultation to him; he accepted power, not as an honor, but as a responsibility; and when, after a severe struggle, power came a second time into his hands, there was something preternatural in his acceptance of it. The first impulse seemed to be a disclaimer of all triumph over the party that had strained their utmost to push him from his seat, — then a sober girding up of his loins to go on with the work to which he was appointed. His last Inaugural was characterized by a tone so peculiarly solemn and free from earthly passion, that it seems to us, now, who look upon it in the light of what has followed, as if his soul had already parted from earthly things and felt the powers of the world to come. It was not the formal state paper of the chief of a party in an hour of victory, so much as the solemn soliloquy of a great soul reviewing its course under a vast responsibility, and appealing from all earthly judgments to the tribunal of Infinite Justice. It was the solemn clearing of his soul for the great sacrament of Death, and the words that he quoted in it with such thrilling power were those of the adoring spirits that veil their faces before the Throne: 'Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!'"

The last paragraph of that last Inaugural, which has been here placed above his head, will forever remain a memorial of holy patience, of large-hearted charity, and of fervent philanthropy, which will enroll him among the noblest, as well as the most catholic of statesmen. It has been inscribed here, as illustrating the tolerant and Christ-like spirit of the man toward

his enemies; and also as a perpetual lesson for all who shall hereafter come to look upon this earthly but faithful counterpart of the man: "With malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the Nation's wound, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

It was while shaping the labors of his second Presidential term, after this benevolent plan, that he was stricken down by the mad frenzy of those who had failed in all other ways to overthrow the government.

> "Slain while a generous peace
> With hopeful heart he planned,
> Slain, while he prayed—'let discord cease,'
> The olive in his hand."

Let every one who shall visit this humble shrine of the poor but grateful freedmen, carry away from the place the memory of these noble words; and in all their intercourse with mankind, and particularly among those whom they may regard as their enemies, strive to practice the same large-hearted charity which shone forth so conspicuously in the illustrious character of ABRAHAM LINCOLN. Thus —

> "May every year but bring more near
> The time when STRIFE SHALL CEASE,
> When TRUTH and LOVE ALL hearts shall move,
> To live in joy and peace.
>
> Now sorrow reigns, and earth complains,
> For folly still her power maintains;
> But the day shall yet appear,
> When the MIGHT with the RIGHT and TRUTH shall be,
> And come what there may to stand in the way,
> That day the world shall see.
>
> Let good men ne'er of truth despair,
> Though humble efforts fail;
> We 'll ne'er give o'er, until once more
> The righteous cause prevail.

Though vain and long, enduring wrong,
The weak shall strive against the strong,
The day shall yet appear,
When MIGHT with the RIGHT and the TRUTH shall be,
And come what there may to stand in the way,
That day the world shall see.

The address was concluded by reading the following favorite poem of Mr. LINCOLN, written by Rev. WILLIAM KNOX of Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1825:

OH! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid,
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall moulder to dust, and together shall lie.

The infant, a mother attended and loved;
The mother, that infant's affection who proved;
The husband, that mother and infant who blest—
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure,— her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn,
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep,
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint, who enjoyed the communion of heaven,
The sinner, who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes — like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes,— even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been ;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen ;
We drink the same stream, we view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking, our fathers would think ;
From the death we are shrinking, our fathers would shrink ;
To the life we are clinging, they also would cling ;
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the wing.

They loved — but the story we cannot unfold ;
They scorned — but the heart of the haughty is cold ;
They grieved — but no wail from their slumbers will come ;
They joyed — but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died — ay, they died ; we things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea ! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain ;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'T is the wink of an eye — 't is the draught of a breath —
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud —
Oh ! why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AT HOME.

Farewell Address to his Neighbors, Springfield, Feb. 12, 1861.

Friends, — No one who has never been placed in a like position can understand my feelings at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting. For more than a quarter of a century I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but kindness at your hands. Here I have lived from my youth until now I am an old man. Here the most sacred ties of earth were assumed. Here all my children were born: here one of them lies buried. To you, dear friends, I owe all that I have, all that I am. All the strange checkered past seems now to crowd upon my mind. To-day I leave you. I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington. Unless the Great God who assisted him shall be with and aid me, I must fail. But if the same omniscient Mind and the same almighty Arm that directed and protected him, shall guide and support me, I shall not fail; I shall succeed. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now. To Him I commend you all. Permit me to ask that, with equal sincerity and faith, you all will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me. With these few words, I must leave you. For how long I know not. Friends, one and all, I must now bid you an affectionate FAREWELL.

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